

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 PC-05 SPTA-02 IO-14
SY-05 /087 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:GBROWN:ZC
APPROVED BY ARA/PPC/P:JDIEDRICH
-----113073 252120Z /14

O 252024Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 216929

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:PBOR, PN

SUBJECT: AIRLIFT OF SANDINISTAS TO PANAMA - NOON BRIEFING

FOLLOWING IS PRESS GUIDANCE POSTS MAY USE IN RESPONSE TO
QUESTIONS ON AIRLIFT OF SANDINISTAS TO PANAMA

BEGIN QUOTE Q: IS PANAMA GIVING SANCTUARY TO THE TERRORISTS
WHO ARRIVED THERE YESTERDAY FROM NICARAGUA?

A: AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE SANDINISTAS WERE AIRLIFTED TO
PANAMA AS A RESULT OF ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENTS OF NICARAGUA, PANAMA, VENEZUELA AND COSTA RICA
TO ASSIST THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS
THERE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PANAMA'S ASSISTANCE WAS AT THE
REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NICARAGUA. WE DO NOT KNOW THE
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TERMS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT BY THE GOVERNMENTS
CONCERNING THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE PRISONERS RELEASED BY
NICARAGUA OR THE SANDINISTAS. THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER HAS SAID THE SANDINISTAS AND THE EX-PRISONERS HAVE
REQUESTED POLITICAL ASYLUM.

Q: IS THE DEPARTMENT IN ACCORD WITH PANAMA'S GIVING

SANCTUARY TO TERRORISTS?

A: WE UNDERSTAND THAT PANAMA, AS WELL AS OTHER GOVERNMENTS AGREED TO COOPERATE AT THE REQUEST OF THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT AND THE ARCHBISHOP WHO WAS NEGOTIATING. I DON'T WANT TO TRY TO CHARACTERIZE THAT DECISION SINCE WE DO NOT KNOW ALL THE CONSIDERATIONS THAT WENT INTO IT.

Q: WILL THE FACT THAT PANAMA HAS ACCEPTED THESE TERRORISTS AFFECT OUR RELATIONS WITH PANAMA?

A: THERE IS NO REASON TO ASSUME IT WILL HAVE ANY ADVERSE EFFECT, BUT AS I SAID, TERMS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOT KNOWN.

Q: DID ALL OF THE SANDINISTAS AND EX-PRISONERS GET OFF IN PANAMA?

A: YES. ACCORDING TO THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ALL REQUESTED TO STAY IN PANAMA. THE HOSTAGES ALSO GOT OFF IN PANAMA AND ARE REPORTED TO BE IN GOOD CONDITION.

Q: PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAS STATED THAT THE SANDINISTAS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE CUBANS. DOES THE UNITED STATES AGREE?

A: WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CONCLUDE THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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CUBA IS ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE SANDINISTAS AT THIS TIME.

Q: DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT CONSIDER THE SANDINISTAS TO BE A MARXIST OR COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION?

A: OUR EVIDENCE IS THAT THE SANDINISTAS ARE SPLIT INTO AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT FACTIONS, TWO OF WHICH HAVE MARXIST TENDENCIES. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHICH OF THE FACTIONS WERE REPRESENTED AMONG THE OCCUPIERS OF THE NICARAGUA NATIONAL PALACE. CHRISTOPHER

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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE216929
Document Source: CORE
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Executive Order: N/A
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Review Release Event: n/a
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TAGS: PBOR, ELTN, PN
To: PANAMA MANAGUA MULTIPLE
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